

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

STEPHEN W. NOEL,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR20-0034-JCC

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on Defendant Stephen Noel's unopposed motion to proceed with a guilty plea hearing by video conference (Dkt. No. 19). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

I. BACKGROUND

Mr. Noel has been charged with possessing methamphetamine with intent to distribute, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and being a felon in possession of a firearm. (Dkt. No. 1 at 1–3.) He would like to plead guilty and proceed with the plea hearing by video conference. (Dkt. No. 19.)

II. DISCUSSION

Delaying Mr. Noel's plea hearing would cause serious harm to the interests of justice. *See* W.D. Wash. General Orders 04-20, 09-20, 14-20, 17-20, 06-21. Under General Order

04-21, in-person proceedings will not resume until May 3, 2021, and even then, the Court will be strictly limiting the number of people who can attend those proceedings. *See* W.D. Wash. General Order 04-21 at 2. Delaying Mr. Noel's plea hearing and, as a consequence, his sentencing, by several weeks would cause serious harm to the interests of justice because Mr. Noel has a strong interest in the speedy resolution of this matter now that he has decided to plead guilty. In addition, Mr. Noel's counsel represents that he has a serious medical condition that the Bureau of Prisons cannot or will not address until he is sentenced. (Dkt. No. 19 at 2.) The Government does not oppose proceeding by video. (*See* Dkt. No. 19 at 1.)

III. CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendant Stephen Noel's motion to proceed with a guilty plea by video conference (Dkt. No. 19) and ORDERS that Mr. Noel's plea hearing be scheduled before a Magistrate Judge as soon as practicable and be conducted by video conference.

DATED this 8th day of April 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Coughenour", is written over a horizontal line.

John C. Coughenour
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE